



Chapter 3

Existing Land Use and Management

3.1 Land Use and Management

This RMP addresses 119 individual parcels comprised of about 17,700 acres of land. Most of this land was originally withdrawn from BLM holdings and a small portion was acquired or purchased from individual landowners. These lands were either acquired or withdrawn for the Minidoka Project during the early 20th century when the MID was developed. During the 1950s, the A&B Irrigation District was created on previously withdrawn lands (see Figure 3.1-1).

Water is diverted from the north side of Lake Walcott into the North Side Canal, a gravity canal and lateral system operated by MID. This system, called the Minidoka project Gravity Division, was constructed by Reclamation in 1905 and serves 72,000 acres of land in the vicinity of Rupert, Idaho. Reclamation began construction on the North Side Pumping Division of the Minidoka project in 1948. It consists of approximately 77,000 acres of irrigable lands that have been withdrawn by Reclamation, of which 62,000 acres (Unit B) are irrigated by pumping groundwater from deep wells, and 15,000 acres (Unit A) by pumping from the Snake River. A&B operates the North Side Pumping Division.

Operation and maintenance of the respective systems were taken over by MID in 1917 and by A&B in 1966. Construction costs of

the systems are reimbursed to Reclamation through long term debt repayment by the irrigation districts.

The lands addressed by this RMP are scattered throughout a rural agricultural setting near the communities of Rupert, Paul, Heyburn, Minidoka, Acequia, Declo, and Burley. Most of the lands are undeveloped. There are currently some uses occurring on these lands such as wetland development and drain runoff for the irrigation districts, wildlife enhancements, municipal sewage treatment, grazing, and agriculture, as well as a variety of unauthorized uses such as ORV use, encroachments, and dumping.

Reclamation also has lands that it manages below Minidoka Dam on the Snake River that are addressed in the RMP. Some of these lands are within the Minidoka Wildlife Refuge. The area is known for good fishing and both sides of the river are frequently used by local anglers (see Photo 3-1).

The majority of the parcels were originally withdrawn from the public domain for the North Side Pumping Division, and were to become private lands irrigated by A&B as part of the North Side Pumping Division Extension Plan (Extension Plan). The Extension Plan was developed in 1984, and was to be authorized by Congress. Land was to be set aside for new irrigation development, wildlife habitat tracts, and



Photo 3-1. The area of Snake River below Minidoka Dam is known for good fishing opportunities.

municipal purposes. This Extension Plan was never finalized and sent through Congress because of a critical groundwater shortage in the area. The remainder of the parcels that were not under the Extension Plan have been withdrawn or acquired by Reclamation over the years for project purposes such as gravel removal, material sites, ponding areas for drainwater cleanup, and other purposes.

3.1.1 Project Facilities

Minidoka Dam and Lake Walcott

Minidoka Dam is a multi-purpose structure providing irrigation, power production, flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife conservation for the lower portion of the Minidoka project (see Photo 3-2). The dam is located on the main stem of the Snake River, 11 miles northeast of Rupert, Idaho. It is an earth and rockfill structure constructed, operated, and maintained by Reclamation.

North Side Canal

Water is diverted on the north side of Minidoka Dam into the North Side Canal, a gravity canal and lateral system serving 72,000 acres of land called the Gravity



Photo 3-2. Minidoka power plant and associated facilities.



Photo 3-3. Control gates located on one of the many irrigation canals.

Division, in the vicinity of Rupert, Idaho. The 8-mile canal is operated by MID and has an initial capacity of 1,700 cubic feet per second (see Photo 3-3).

South Side Canal

Water is diverted on the south side of Lake Walcott near the left abutment of Minidoka Dam into the South Side Canal system, operated by Burley Irrigation District (BID) which includes three large pumping plants. Each plant lifts the water about 30 feet, for a total lift of about 90 feet. The system, known as the South Side Pumping Division, serves 48,000 acres adjacent to Burley and Declo. The canal is 13 miles long and has an initial capacity of 1,325 cubic feet per second.

Title to the South Side Canal, as well as all rights-of-way, pumping plants, canals,

Insert Figure 3.1-1

Back of Figure 3.1-1

laterals, drains, transmission lines, and appurtenant facilities, were transferred to the BID (the operating agency for the South Side Pumping Division) on February 24, 2000.

3.1.2 Land Management

IDFG Wildlife Management

As described earlier, Reclamation manages about 17,700 acres in the RMP Study Area, divided among 119 parcels. Under the Extension Plan, a portion of these lands were set aside for wildlife purposes, primarily upland habitat. This acreage originally included 34 of the 119 parcels. Portions of 39 other parcels were also included. These lands were to be managed according to three separate contracts between Reclamation and IDFG. The first of the IDFG contracts (#14 06-100-5429) was dated March 15, 1966, included two parcels, and encompassed approximately 60 acres. This 25-year contract expired in 1991 and was not renewed; however, two other contracts are still active, containing a total of 3,406.04 acres. Contract No. 0-07-10-L0388 is for 1,019.24 acres and will expire September 23, 2005. Contract No. 6-07-10-L791 is for 2,386.8 acres and will expire on November 1, 2011. Under the terms of the contracts, the IDFG-managed lands are open to the public and IDFG is responsible for law enforcement and weed control. The contracts also authorize IDFG to construct site improvements such as roads, trails, and other infrastructure. In addition, IDFG issued farm cooperative agreements on some of these lands that permitted some agricultural practices in exchange for habitat improvements. These agreements expired approximately 10 years ago and were never reissued. Resource constraints have limited IDFG's ability to implement many of the provisions of the contracts, but IDFG is still considered an informal partner in the management of these lands.

Lake Walcott State Park

Lake Walcott State Park, which is adjacent to Lake Walcott and Minidoka Dam and within the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge, is a Reclamation-developed public recreation site with boating, day use and camping facilities. Reclamation has a lease agreement with IDPR to administer the 140-acre Lake Walcott State Park for public recreation. IDPR assumed responsibility for operation and maintenance of recreation facilities at the park constructed by either Reclamation or IDPR per the lease agreement. The term of the lease agreement is 20 years, from the effective date of July 1, 1996, through June 30, 2016, and is subject to additional terms listed in the lease agreement. Some maintenance services at the park are performed through an agreement with IDPR by Idaho Youth Ranch. Historically, the park has received a great deal of local support in terms of cost sharing and volunteer services for construction of park projects and serves as the primary local park for Minidoka and Cassia Counties and the community of Rupert.

National Wildlife Refuge

The Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge is managed by FWS subject to an MOU signed between the two agencies on April 23, 1964. FWS management includes the water surface of Lake Walcott and most lands adjacent to the lake with the exception of the State Park and Reclamation Zone surrounding Minidoka Dam. Part of the Refuge is open to public hunting and fishing. FWS does not currently have a refuge management plan in place; however, there are management objectives established. A management plan is scheduled for completion in the near future.

Reclamation Zone

Reclamation has retained exclusive management of an area immediately upstream and downstream of the Minidoka Dam for operations, maintenance, and security purposes.

3.1.3 Easements and Leases

Transferred Works

Although ownership was retained by the United States (Reclamation), responsibility for care operation, and maintenance of various property and facilities associated with project purposes was transferred to the irrigation districts for continued operation of the irrigation systems. Examples of transferred works include irrigation facilities such as pumps, wells, pumping plants, and laterals as well as ditch rider's homes, vehicles, and tools transferred by Reclamation to A&B on March 1, 1966.

Agriculture and Grazing

Farming and grazing has been authorized on many of the parcels over the years. Reclamation currently administers nine such leases on 2,162 acres. Six agricultural leases total 196 acres, while three grazing leases total 1,966 acres (two dry for 1,918 acres and one irrigated for 48 acres). The term of each lease is 1 year with the option to extend four successive additional periods of 1 year each. Agricultural leases issued in 2003 cannot be extended beyond February 28, 2008. Whether future leasing will occur would be determined at that time. Agricultural leases require soil protection by mandatory rotation of cover crops and planting of grasses on all cultivated acreage at the end of any lease that is not reissued. Many of the terms and conditions of agricultural leases are similar to those governing the grazing leases except the rental charges are substantially higher for agriculture leases. Rather than protecting the resource through crop rotation, grazing leases

limit animal unit months (AUMs) as well as the specific time period during which grazing is permitted.

Six grazing leases on the A&B totaling 2,343 acres were terminated in 1995. In addition, two agricultural leases totaling 23.5 acres were terminated in 2002 as a result of water issues raised in the State's adjudication process. One additional agricultural lease on 4.8 acres was terminated February 28, 2004.

Current farming and grazing leases are summarized in Table 3.1-1.

Apiary Sites Special Land Use Permit

In addition to agriculture and grazing leases, Reclamation issued special use permits to two permittees to maintain honey bee colonies on three Reclamation parcels within the RMP Study Area: 922-5-W, 824-6-W, and 1021-6-W. The permits restrict the use to 80 colonies per 100-foot by 100-foot site.

Cooperative Wildlife Habitat Development Agreements

Some farming has occurred on Reclamation lands as a result of cooperative agreements issued by IDFG on some of the lands IDFG was contracted to manage. Farm Cooperative Agreements were arrangements between IDFG and neighboring farmers that allowed the farmers to use portions of the IDFG-managed property for crop production in exchange for habitat improvements. Under this type of development, selected portions of tracts were farmed by the adjacent land owner and an equal number of acres were planted with irrigated nesting cover for upland game birds. Food patches and shelterbelts may also have been developed where possible. In cases where the farmer was agreeable, portions of privately-owned unusable farmland may have been improved and included in the agreement (Reclamation Lease File).

Table 3.1-1. Agriculture and Grazing Lease Summary.

Parcel	Use	Acres	Contract Number
925-8-W	Grazing (dry)	80	0-07-14-LA351
921-7-W	Grazing (dry)	1838	7-07-14-LA261
922-6-W	Grazing (irrigated)	48.3	3-07-14-LA419
825-14-W	Agriculture	35.3	3-07-14-LA410
921-1-W	Agriculture	42.4	3-07-14-LA416
724-1-W	Agriculture	9.5	3-07-14-LA417
824-7-W	Agriculture	67.9	3-07-14-LA418
821-2-W	Agriculture	38.4	3-07-14-LA420
921-1-W	Agriculture	3	3-07-14-LA422

Source: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Lease File, 2003.

These agreements expired approximately ten years ago and were never reissued.

Municipal and Industrial Uses

A number of Reclamation parcels have been, or are currently, in use for municipal and industrial purposes. Several examples of these are described below.

The City of Rupert has an agreement with Reclamation to use four tracts totaling 600 acres of Reclamation land to spread treated waste water from the City's sewage treatment ponds. This lease was initiated on May 1, 1989, for one year, and has been renewed on an annual basis. Only 160 of these acres, located on Parcel 824-11-W, are receiving waste water. This wastewater is disposed of using a pivot irrigation system; the irrigated land being cropped by City lessees. The remaining 440 acres have never been cropped, nor had waste water applied, but are needed to facilitate expanded treatment capacity. Reclamation is currently working with the City of Rupert and BLM to transfer the 600 acres to City ownership.

A small portion of Parcel 824-8-W has been used by Minidoka County as a repository for

fill and other material for road building through an informal agreement with Reclamation. Several other Reclamation parcels are also used for storage of similar materials such as Parcel 921-11-W and 824-8-W. Some of these uses are informally authorized and some are not, and they will need to be formalized or addressed as an unauthorized use. In addition, portions of Parcel 923-1-W was formerly used as a County Landfill.

3.1.4 Adjacent Land Uses

Use of lands adjoining Reclamation parcels within the Study Area were manually inventoried using aerial photography. Nearly all adjacent lands were determined to be used for agricultural purposes or left vacant with potential grazing use. Since most lands bordering Reclamation parcels are located within the boundaries of irrigation districts, most of these parcels are currently used for irrigated agriculture. Likewise, lands bordering Reclamation parcels located on the borders of or outside the irrigation districts are in either non-irrigated agricultural use or appear to be vacant. Since it is difficult to determine from aerial photography if a non-farmed parcel is being

grazed, these parcels were simply classified “vacant/grazing.” Other applicable land use classifications for adjacent lands include urban, residential, and municipal/industrial. In addition, Reclamation parcels bordering the Snake River were also identified accordingly. Table 3.1-2 summarizes adjacent land uses. This data is fairly general, with emphasis on dominant land use patterns.

The inventory also identified adjoining Reclamation parcels: 40 of the 119 parcels inventoried, or 35 percent of the total, share at least one property line with another Reclamation parcel.

3.1.5 Unauthorized Land Uses

The majority of Reclamation parcels are unmarked, unused for project operations, and are not being farmed or grazed. A variety of uses that have not been authorized occur on these lands, ranging from agricultural encroachments to illegal dumping and ORV use.

Agricultural Encroachments

The most common unauthorized land use occurring on Reclamation lands is agricultural encroachment by neighboring farms. This typically results from squaring-up agricultural fields for wheel-line irrigation systems and changing field boundaries to allow use of pivot systems.

Most of the agricultural encroachments are believed to be in current irrigated agricultural use but some are now idle because the use of pivots creates empty field corners. A total of 147 agricultural encroachments have been identified by Reclamation, affecting 70 Reclamation parcels. More than half of all Reclamation parcels are encroached upon by neighboring agricultural uses. Most are affected by only one small encroachment, although multiple encroachments are not uncommon. One parcel has 12 individual encroachments totaling nearly as many acres and another parcel has 3 with a combined acreage of over 29 acres. In total, agricultural encroachments are estimated to use 394.2 acres of Reclamation land as summarized in Table 3.1-3. Reclamation is developing a plan/procedure to be used regarding each unauthorized use. Initial contacts with encroaching parties began in the fall of 2004.

Other Types of Unauthorized Use

A number of other types of unauthorized use also occur or have occurred in the past on Reclamation lands. Reclamation has identified 32 separate sites, containing 61.3 acres on some 25 Reclamation parcels; however, other unauthorized uses are likely. Unauthorized uses include dumping, ORV use, target practice/shooting sites, material storage, apiary sites, and other uses.

Table 3.1-2. Adjacent Land Use Summary.

Use Classification	%	Notes
Irrigated Agriculture	58.0	Includes green farms and fields with visible irrigation equipment
Dry Agriculture	3.7	May include some formerly irrigated parcels
Vacant/Grazing	18.6	Mostly vacant parcels but grazing may occur on some.
Residential	0.6	Includes concentrations of housing
Municipal/Industrial	0.4	Includes gravel extraction sites
Urban	4.5	Includes mix of high density development
Mixed	8.0	This includes a mixture of the above categories
Other	6.1	This includes parcels bordering the Snake River and unidentified land uses

Source: Land Use inventory based on Reclamation GIS data, 2003.

Table 3.1-3. Summary of Known Agriculture Encroachments by Reclamation Parcel¹.

Parcel ID	Number of Encroachments	Unauthorized Acreage	Parcel ID	Number of Encroachments	Unauthorized Acreage
1021-1-W	2	11.9	825-13-W	1	1.3
1021-2-W	10	7.2	825-15-W	1	1.2
1022-3-W	1	3.8	825-1-W	1	6.9
1022-4-W	3	3.9	825-2-W	7	17.2
1022-5-W	1	9.6	825-3-W	1	0.4
1022-6-W	1	1.0	825-4-W	2	4.0
724-2-W	2	5.2	825-7-W	1	0.9
724-3-W	3	4.6	825-8-W	5	9.3
724-5-W	1	0.1	825-9-W	4	12.1
725-1-W	1	5.7	921-10-W	1	10.2
725-2-W	1	0.1	921-11-W	4	6.4
725-3-W	2	3.5	921-13-W	1	1.8
725-4-W	1	1.7	921-3-W	1	2.6
725-5-W	12	11.8	921-6-W	3	4.3
821-2-W	3	29.3	921-7-W	2	17.4
822-1-W	1	2.5	921-8-W	2	9.9
823-1-W	2	0.6	921-9-W	1	1.1
823-2-W	1	0.8	922-12-W	1	0.9
823-3-W	1	1.1	922-13-A	1	4.1
823-4-W	1	1.5	922-15-A	1	0.7
823-5-W	1	5.7	922-1-W	1	0.9
823-6-W	2	3.9	922-2-W	1	4.1
823-7-W	1	3.9	922-4-W	1	4.7
823-8-W	1	0.5	922-6-W	8	25.8
824-12-W	1	1.1	922-8-W	1	3.8
824-13-A	1	9.4	922-9-W	1	0.7
824-14-A	1	5.0	923-2-W	3	22.3
824-2-W	1	8.0	923-3-W	4	20.0
824-3-W	1	0.1	924-1-W	5	3.3
824-6-W	2	0.5	924-2-W	1	0.2
824-8-W	4	23.8	924-4-W	2	3.0
824-9-W	1	3.5	925-10-W	1	0.6
825-10-W	5	7.1	925-3-W	2	2.2
825-11-A	1	2.7	925-8-W	1	1.5
825-12-W	1	6.9	Total:	147	394.2

¹The number of encroachments and associated acreages continues to change. The data shown here represent the numbers and acreage at one specific point in time.

Source: Land Use inventory based on Reclamation GIS data, 2003.

After agricultural encroachment, the most common unauthorized use has traditionally been illegal dumping. Piles of field rock remaining from when the land was cleared, or broken concrete from former irrigation system components, have been dumped in many of these parcels over the years. On some sites, illegally dumped material has also contained solid waste. The most notable example of this can be seen on Parcel 825 15 W, illustrated in Photo 3-4. Unauthorized tree cutting has also taken place on this site. Target practice and shooting are other unauthorized uses that commonly occur on some parcels, such as portions of Parcels 824-8-W and 1022-5-W. Unauthorized ORV use also occurs on many parcels including those on Parcel 824-8-W, shown in Photo 3-5.

Reclamation, in cooperation with the Bonneville Power Administration, does have



Photo 3-4. Illegally dumped materials.



Photo 3-5. Photo showing ORV damage (and agricultural encroachment in top left corner of photo).

a crime witness program in place (see Photo 3-6). This program affords a person reporting a crime (e.g., illegal dumping) anonymity and a cash reward if it leads to the arrest and conviction of the party responsible for the crime. See Appendix E for further information related to this program. However, this program has been underutilized in the past.

Reclamation addressed the unauthorized dumping problem on 9 of the dump sites by contracting to have these sites cleaned up in



Photo 3-6. Copy of a brochure containing information regarding Reclamation's Crime Witness program.

2003/2004. These sites ranged from older trash dumping areas to areas where dumping continues to occur and included both “highly visible” and “remote” sites. Material removed included residential trash, abandoned vehicles and farm equipment, old appliances, fencing materials, and damaged irrigation equipment. During the 2003/2004 clean up effort, 192 tons of illegally dumped material was removed at a cost to the taxpayers of \$127,500.

Rock and concrete were not included in cleanup sites completed in 2003/2004. Future cleanup contracts will consider removal and/or burial of rock and concrete at selected sites. The cleanup effort reflected Reclamation’s intent to better manage its lands and provide better public education regarding where Reclamation lands are and that continued dumping is not acceptable. As part of this effort “No Dumping” signs have been placed in the fall of 2004 at all sites where cleanup has already occurred and at sites where dumping presently exists.

Non-agricultural encroachments are summarized in Table 3.1-4.

3.2 Recreation and Access

Recreation is an important use of Federal and private lands in the Study Area, often tied to roads and accessible water bodies. The primary water bodies in the Study Area are the Snake River and Lake Walcott (see Photo 3-7). Much of the property along the river corridor is privately owned, with public access points concentrated at Lake Walcott. Several recreation facilities are located within the Study Area vicinity.

Many of these facilities are associated with the Snake River and provide similar recreation opportunities, such as camping, boating, picnicking, swimming, and fishing, as those found at facilities within the Study Area. Recreation providers in the region include IDPR, BLM, IDFG, Idaho Power, Inc., and various local agencies.

Table 3.1-4. Summary Of Non-Agriculture Encroachments by Reclamation Parcel.

Parcel ID	Number of Encroachments	Unauthorized Acreage	Parcel ID	Number of Encroachments	Unauthorized Acreage
1021-2-W	3	0.8	825-3-W	1	3.2
1021-5-W	1	18.2	825-5-W	1	0.3
1021-6-W	1	1.1	825-8-W	1	5.7
1023-1-W	2	0.1	921-11-W	1	3.2
1024-1-W	1	0.1	921-13-W	1	3.9
1024-2-W	1	0.7	921-1-W	2	3.5
823-7-W	1	2.1	922-10-W	1	0.9
824-3-W	1	0.1	922-11-W	1	0.6
825-13-W	1	1.8	923-4-W	1	1.2
825-14-W	1	0.3	924-1-W	1	0.2
825-15-W	3	6.2	925-2-W	2	3.2
825-2-W	2	2.2	925-8-W	1	1.8
			Total	32	61.3

Source: Land Use inventory based on GIS data supplied by U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 2003.



Photo 3-7. Lake Walcott and distant mountains as seen from the State Park.

3.2.1 Recreation Activities within the Study Area Boundary

Numerous land- and water-based recreation activities occur in the region, including fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, camping, day use (such as picnicking and swimming), boating, trail use, ORV use, skiing, and snowmobiling. Table 3.2-1 provides an overview of the more typical recreation activities known to occur on specific Reclamation parcels in the Study Area.

Table 3.2-1. Recreation Activities on Specific Reclamation Parcels in the Study Area.

Parcel Number/Name	Recreation Activities						
	Fishing	Hunting	ORV Use ¹	Wildlife Viewing	Target Practice ¹	River Access	Camping ²
824-7-W/E Pond		x		x			
922-6-W		x			x		
923-4-W		x	x				
925-4-W ³	x					x	x
1022-5-W		x			x		
824-8-W/F-Drain		x			x		
825-8-W		x					
825-16-A							
D-5 Drain	x	x				x	
925-9-W	x	x				x	
925-1-W		x					x
925-5-A							x
1021-5-W	x	x				x	
1024-1-W	x	x				x	
1022-5-W (Cinder Pit)		x			x		

¹Unless specifically opened for such use, ORV use and concentrated target practice/shooting ranges are unauthorized activities on Reclamation lands

²The only designated camping area is on Parcel 925-1-W. All other camping is on an ad-hoc basis.

³Camping is not allowed on the Minidoka NWR portion of this parcel; however, ad hoc camping does occur in the area of Bishop's Hole.

Source: Reclamation 2002.

Fishing access is an important component of the outdoor recreation experience at parcels along the Snake River. IDFG maintains three Sportsman Access Areas in the Study Area: Peterson Island, near the town of Declo; Minidoka Pond, east of Heyburn; and Ponderosa Pond, just north of Burley. Each of these areas provides parking, a boat dock, and fishing access. There is an accessible fishing dock at Minidoka Pond (IDFG 2002). In addition to these established fishing access sites, several of the Reclamation parcels along the Snake River are currently serving as informal river access sites (see Table 3.2-1). Bishop's Hole is one of the most popular of these sites (see Photo 3-8). This area receives regular use throughout the year by anglers and for other day use activities (picnicking, wildlife viewing, etc.). Until recently, it was the location of the largest Eastern cottonwood in the United States. Unfortunately, in August 2002 it suffered major damage requiring removal of the downed tree (see Photos 3-9 and 3-10).

Camping is allowed on BLM land, and dispersed camping occurs on much of the Federal land in the Study Area. In addition, camping is allowed at most of the Sportsman Access Sites maintained by IDFG. Camping is a popular activity in



Photo 3-8. Bishop's Hole, located just downstream of Minidoka Dam, is a popular fishing site and day use area.



Photo 3-9. A "before" photo of the *Record Tree* (previously the largest Eastern cottonwood in the U.S.) taken in October 2001.



Photo 3-10. An "after" photo of the same tree taken a week after incurring major damage (August 2002).

several areas just downstream of Minidoka Dam, particularly on holiday weekends (see Table 3.2-1). Camping in these areas is potentially hazardous, because large fluctuations in water flow occur with little or no warning.

Hunting is a popular activity in the Study Area and occurs on nearly all of the

Reclamation parcels. Exceptions include Lake Walcott State Park, parcels near dam facilities, parcels where firearms are specifically prohibited, urban parcels, and very small parcels. Primary hunting activities include waterfowl and upland game birds. Much of the hunting activity on Reclamation parcels is generally focused around constructed wetland areas as a result of the concentration of waterfowl. Hunting is also allowed on IDFG access sites and is a popular activity on BLM land near Lake Walcott (Personal Communication, A. Crump, Recreation Technician, BLM Burley Field Office, June 3, 2002). Intermittent target practice and shooting occur in the Study Area (see Table 3.2-1); however, concentrated target practice and shooting ranges are prohibited on Reclamation lands unless specifically permitted for such use. Because of safety concerns, a portion of parcel 824-8-W was closed to firearms and vehicles by the A&B Irrigation District. In addition, Reclamation has worked closely with Minidoka County in developing an ordinance (Minidoka County Ordinance No. 96-3) that prohibits the discharge of firearms, and subsequently target practice/shooting on parcel 1024-1-W. This ordinance is posted at parcel 1024-1-W. Reclamation also recently closed the Cinder Pit (parcel 1022-5-W) to target practice and shooting due to safety concerns.

ORV use is occurring in the Study Area; however, unless specifically opened for such use, ORV use is prohibited on Reclamation lands. At this time, no Reclamation parcels within the Study Area are open to ORV use.

3.2.2 Recreation Facilities

Few developed recreation facilities occur on Reclamation lands in the RMP Study Area. Exceptions include Lake Walcott State Park and Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge.

Lake Walcott State Park

Lake Walcott State Park is located at the northwest end of Lake Walcott, 11 miles northeast of Rupert, accessed from State Highway 24. Dating from the earliest days of the Minidoka Project, the park was developed somewhat informally in response to various needs and policies of Reclamation. The park area nearest the dam first served as a construction camp for the dam, and later uses included housing camps for Reclamation employees and Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees. While Reclamation officially named the area “Walcott Park” in 1912, it was not developed for public recreational purposes until the 1930s. Much of the site development in the park, including the rock walls still visible today, was completed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (see Photo 3-11). A formal master plan was developed for the park in 1938, yet funding cutbacks and the disbandment of the Civilian Conservation Corps limited the improvements made at the park. Although closed to the public during World War II, the popularity and use of Walcott Park grew steadily once open again in the 1950s. The park was briefly under the jurisdiction of the FWS in the mid-1960s and became a state park in 1996 (Reclamation 1998b).



Photo 3-11. Walls built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the early part of the 20th century.

The park is open year round; however, the camping season extends from May 1 through October 1. Lake Walcott State Park is the only developed park on the reservoir and the only place where camping is allowed. The entire park, managed by IDPR for Reclamation, is situated within the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge and the refuge headquarters building is located within the park. The 140-acre park is in a quiet, grassy setting with many large, mature shade trees. Activities include camping, fishing, boating, waterskiing, bird watching, basketball, horseshoes, and picnicking. The park also has an 18-hole disc (Frisbee™) golf course that serves as the venue each April for the Lake Walcott Open disc golf tournament. Wading and beach swimming are not allowed at Lake Walcott State Park.

The park is generally divided into three separate use areas: day use, camping, and boating. The day use area is on the west end, the camping is approximately in the middle, and the boat launch is on the east end of the park. Paved trails wind throughout the park and provide foot access and some waterfront trails to each of the different use areas and to Minidoka Dam (see Photo 3-12). There is also a dirt hiking trail that leaves the park near the boat ramp and follows the shoreline for approximately 1.5 miles. The park provides extensive picnicking opportunities, with five picnic shelters and approximately



Photo 3-12. Pathways connect various areas within the park.

200 individual picnic sites. The day use area also provides an interpretive kiosk that provides historical information about the local area and the construction of Minidoka Dam.

The park has four camping areas, one for recreational vehicles (RVs) and three separate tent areas. The RV area provides 23 sites with water and electric hook-ups, including one site for a campground host (see Photo 3-13). The three separate tent areas each accommodate approximately eight tent sites. Each tent area has a small parking area adjacent to it, as the tent areas are for walk-in camping only.



Photos 3-13. RV campsite at Lake Walcott State Park.

Additional camping opportunities have recently been made available with the addition of two new camper cabins. Each of these wood cabins is approximately 200 square feet, and is located to the west of the RV camping area adjacent to the upper parking lot. Each cabin has a deck facing Lake Walcott, electrical outlets, heating and air conditioning, and outdoor water spigots. Paved trails provide pedestrian access to the restrooms, parking lot, and other trails throughout the park. Each cabin has a maximum occupancy of five; however, the maximum accessible occupancy is three. Each cabin has a bunk bed and futon couch. Use of the cabins is from May 1 through October 1. The cost to rent these cabins is

approximately \$41.00 (\$35.00 for cabin, \$4.00 entrance fee, plus appropriate taxes).

Boat ramps are open at Lake Walcott State Park from April 1 through September 30. A two-lane concrete boat ramp with approximately 60 parking spaces is located at the east end of the park (see Photo 3-14). Approximately 5 miles of shoreline are available for year-round bank fishing; however, fishing is not allowed from the boat dock. Available species include rainbow trout, largemouth bass, and yellow perch.

A number of special events are held in the park throughout the year. These events do not require a permit; however, the group hosting the event must contact the park office in advance. Popular group events include family reunions, company picnics, and group camping. Specific special events held at the park include a disc golf tournament, the Reclamation-sponsored “Catch a Special Thrill” event, and high school cross-country running meets.

The park provides a no-fee shower building with four showers. The shower building is located in the RV area, although it is open to all campers. There are a total of seven restroom buildings scattered throughout the



Photo 3-14. The two boat ramps located at the east end of the park.

park. The restrooms and showers are open only during the camping season and remain closed throughout the winter. There is an RV dump station located in the park; however, it is currently closed because of high phosphate content in recent water samples. As an alternative, RV users can use a nearby dump station approximately 10 miles west of the park along Highway 24. User fees in 2004 were \$18/night for RVs and \$12/night for tents. The park also charges a Motorized Vehicle Entrance Fee of \$4 for any non-camping visit; however, an Annual State Park Passport (\$25 in 2004) allows unlimited day use. New in 2004, the Motorized Vehicle Entrance Fee was not waived for campers; that is, campers were charged the fee in addition to the overnight camping fee. Also new in 2004, state sales tax was added to all entrance fees.

Maintenance in the park is performed by a crew of four seasonal maintenance workers. In addition, volunteers from organizations such as Boy Scouts and Idaho Youth Ranch help maintain the park. Security in the park is provided by the park ranger and a seasonal employee who stays in the campground during the summer and acts as a camp host. In addition, firefighters from two local fire districts (East End and North End Fire Districts) act as volunteer security personnel during busy weekends.

Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge

Minidoka NWR, managed by FWS, includes about 80 miles of shoreline around Lake Walcott, stretching about 25 miles upstream from Minidoka Dam. About half of the refuge’s 20,699 acres is open water and wetlands (FWS 2001). The diversity of habitats at Minidoka NWR supports a wide variety of birds and mammals. While the refuge is open to visitors year-round, public access may be limited in certain places throughout the year to protect wildlife. Designated recreation areas within the

refuge include public hunting land areas, public hunting water areas, boat fishing areas, and Lake Walcott State Park (see Photo 3-15). Fishing from boats on Lake Walcott is permitted from April 1 through September 30. Fishing from shore is permitted year-round in accordance with state fishing regulations. Motorized vehicles are permitted only on designated roads and several hunter parking areas are provided. Improved access roads are closed to vehicles January 15 to September 20; however, foot access is allowed at any time throughout the refuge. There are two boat ramps in the refuge, one at Lake Walcott State Park and the other just downstream of Tule Island. Wading and beach swimming are not allowed within the refuge and camping is allowed only within Lake Walcott State Park.



Photo 3-15. Interpretive sign at the State Park describing wildlife values within the adjacent Minidoka NWR.

3.2.3 Visitor Profile and Use Levels

In 2000, a survey of recreation users at Lake Walcott State Park was administered with a sample size of 197 (IDPR, EDAW 2000). Limited survey data are also available from visitor surveys conducted by IDPR in 1999, 2000, and 2001. Results from each survey provide information regarding visitor profiles and perceptions of the park and its facilities. The results of these completed surveys are the basis for the visitor information presented below. It should be

noted, however, that in each of the 3 years for which the IDPR survey data are available, the sample size was quite small (ranging from 13 to 36 completed surveys). Therefore, these data are not statistically significant, but do provide an overall idea of general use and visitation patterns.

The 2000 survey provided information regarding the location of the primary residence of visitors. Eighty-four percent of respondents were from Idaho. The majority of visitors were from Minidoka County (37 percent) and Cassia County (30 percent). These numbers indicate that Walcott State Park primarily serves visitors from the immediate area.

The survey asked respondents to indicate all of the types of recreation activities they participated in while visiting Walcott State Park. Picnicking was the activity most participated in by park users, followed by rest/relaxing, sightseeing, other activities, fishing, and numerous other activities (see Table 3.2-2).

Overall, visitors perceive few problems with capacity and conflict in the area. Several questions related to social capacity were

Table 3.2-2. Primary Activities at Lake Walcott State Park.

Activity	Respondents (percent)
Picnicking	66
Rest/relaxing	28
Sightseeing	18
Other activities	17
Fishing	16
Wildlife observation	10
Hiking	10
Waterskiing	10
Camping	9
Swimming*	8
Powerboating	6
Sightseeing	5

*Although swimming is not allowed at Lake Walcott, survey respondents noted that it is an activity that some of them participate in.

Source: IDPR, EDAW 2000

included in the survey to determine how visitors felt about crowding at the park. Nearly 4 out of 10 respondents (38 percent) indicated problems with disruptive behavior by others as “a big problem.” This value may indicate that high use levels could be creating conditions that lead to conflicts among visitors. Such conflicts, however, do not apparently significantly detract from visitors’ overall satisfaction with their visit to the park. Almost all survey respondents (94 percent) indicated that they were either “extremely satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with their visit to Walcott State Park.

3.2.4 Access

Access to the scattered parcels in the Minidoka North Side RMP Study Area is primarily by secondary, rural roads. Main roads are shown on the Regional Location Map at the beginning of this document. Interstate 84 (I-84) runs east and west through the RMP Study Area. East of the Study Area, I-84 turns to the south towards Ogden, Utah. I-86 continues east to American Falls and Pocatello, Idaho. I-84 and I-86 follow the Snake River and link the major population centers of southern Idaho, including Boise, Twin Falls, and Pocatello. The communities of Burley and Heyburn are located immediately adjacent to and south of I-84, and Rupert and Paul lie further to the north. Four freeway exits serve the Study Area communities. The Study Area also contains two-lane state routes. The rural roads in the RMP Study Area generally follow a grid system, except where diverted around such features as canals, railroad tracks, and the Snake River. The roads are numbered north and south parallel to Baseline Road, roughly following State Route (SR) 25, and east and west parallel to Meridian Road.

Dirt, two-track roads traverse many of the Reclamation parcels in the Minidoka North

Side RMP area (see Photo 3-16). Some are used to access Reclamation facilities. Most have been created by public use over many years and some result from trespass and ORV use (see Photo 3-17). Table 3.2-3 shows the number of roads in each parcel in terms of the parcel size, as identified from low level aerial photographs. This qualitative analysis, based on review of 100 parcels in aerial photos, indicates that 95 percent of the parcels contain roads. All but four of the small-sized parcels and one of the medium-sized parcels contain roads.



Photo 3-16. Typical two-track dirt road.



Photo 3-17. Extensive damage caused by ORVs from overland travel off one of the many two-track dirt roads.

Table 3.2-3. Dirt Roads Through Parcels as Related to Parcel Size.

Parcel Size	Road Frequency				Total Parcels of Each Size
	High: More than 5 roads on parcel	Medium: 3 to 4 roads on parcel	Low: 1 or 2 roads on parcel	None: No roads in parcel	
Small: Less than 160 acres or 1/4 section	8	18	53	4	83
Medium: 1/4 section to 1 section	6	1	2	1	10
Large: Greater than 1 section	4	2	1	0	7
Total Parcels of Each Road Frequency	18	21	56	5	100

Note: Linear parcels that follow canals and roads are not included

Source: Compilation of available GIS data and aerial photography by CH2M HILL.

Of the seven large parcels reviewed (greater than 1 section, or 1 square mile), all contained roads and more than half contained more than five roads. Likewise, more than half of the 10 medium-sized parcels ranging from 1/4 section to 1 section in size contained more than 5 roads per parcel. Only one medium-sized parcel did not contain roads. Small parcels, those less than 160 acres, were often physically too small to contain many roads. However, nearly 10 percent of those small parcels contained more than five roads. Approximately 22 percent contained three or four roads, and 64 percent contained one or two roads.

3.3 Public Services and Utilities

3.3.1 Emergency Fire Suppression Services

Wildland fires are common in the Study Area, typically resulting from accidental ignition (such as cigarettes, vehicle exhaust systems, and lightning strikes), as well as the intentional burning of adjacent cropland. The combination of fire and overgrazing has reduced the amount of native cover (sagebrush, forbs, and grasses) and facilitated the invasion of cheatgrass. An annual invasive species, cheatgrass dries early in the season becoming highly flammable, increasing the incidence and

facilitating the spread of wildland fires (FWS 1989).

Wildland fire suppression is coordinated by the South-Central Idaho Interagency Dispatch Center (SCHC), a cooperative arrangement between BLM, Reclamation, FWS, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), National Park Service (NPS), and the State of Idaho. The primary function of the SCHC is to provide cost effective and timely responses to wildland fire incidents primarily through initial attack using the closest available forces, regardless of jurisdiction. BLM is the major provider of fire suppression services, providing staffing and equipment for initial fire attack and full suppression.

A typical response to a wildland fire includes two small engines, each staffed by 2 to 3 person crews, a larger engine with five personnel, a single-engine aerial tanker and a helicopter (Personal Communication, Mike Aoi, June 6, 2002). The closest BLM fire station to the Study Area is in Burley. This station maintains four small engines and one large engine. A BLM fire response helicopter is based in Jerome and two single engine tankers are based at the Twin Falls Airport (Personal Communication, Mike Aoi, June 6, 2002).

Reclamation and BLM have a long-standing (since 1955) relationship for wildland fire

suppression. The agencies have an agreement that authorizes BLM to provide wildland fire suppression activities on certain withdrawn and acquired lands under Reclamation's jurisdiction in the region. Most of the lands within the Study Area are provided coverage through this agreement.

Fires occurring at Lake Walcott State Park and Minidoka Dam are the responsibility of the East End Fire Department, which is co-located with the City of Rupert Fire and Rescue Department. The East End Fire Department consists of four units including a 3,500 gallon tanker, a 1,000 gallon foam unit, a 1,000-gallon pumper, and a quick response unit staffed by 20 volunteer fire fighters. The City of Rupert Fire and Rescue Department has responsibility for confined space and high angle rescues occurring at the Lake Walcott State Park and Minidoka Dam. Response time to Lake Walcott State Park and Minidoka Dam is estimated to be 10 to 15 minutes. There have not been any emergencies at Lake Walcott State Park and Minidoka Dam that required response by either fire department in recent memory (Personal Communication, Larry Pool, August 15, 2002).

The East End Fire Department is a division of the Minidoka County Fire Protection District, consisting of four fire stations in Minidoka County. The Minidoka County Fire Protection District has had a mutual aid agreement with BLM since 1966 facilitating coordinated fire response throughout the Study Area (Personal Communication, Larry Pool, August 15, 2002). BLM does not provide structural fire suppression services.

The FWS provides wildland fire suppression activities for those lands within the Study Area located within the NWR, but not including Lake Walcott State Park or the Minidoka Dam site. Those lands are included in the FWS Wildland Fire

Management Plan for the Southeast Idaho National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 2001.

3.3.2 Law Enforcement

The majority of the Study Area is located within an area patrolled by the Minidoka Sheriff's Office. This agency is staffed by 38 sworn officers who patrol the area on a four-shift rotation. The area is patrolled by 17 patrols, each cruiser operated by a single officer. In addition, the Minidoka Sheriff's Office patrols the waters of the Snake River between the Minidoka Dam and the Milner Dam as well as the western part of Lake Walcott. The Cassia County Sheriff's Department patrols Reclamation parcels located in Cassia County. They provide 24-hour scheduled coverage by 27 sworn officers, including 5 resident deputies plus an additional 10 volunteer reserves.

Currently, no formal agreement exists between the Minidoka and Cassia County Sheriff's Offices and Reclamation; however, the patrol area does include Reclamation lands. Principal law enforcement concerns relevant to Reclamation include illegal dumping, unauthorized ORV and firearm use, vandalism, and drug interdiction. The water patrol, which uses both personal watercraft and boats, also enforces the State's boating laws and provides law enforcement on behalf of Jerome and Blaine counties (Personal Communication, Dan Kindig, May 29, 2002). The Minidoka Sheriff's Office has expressed interest in increased access to the river for patrol purposes through Reclamation property. Cassia County Sheriff's Department patrols Bishop's Hole at least once daily for illegal camping, dumping, and other concerns (Personal Communication, Cary Bristol, June 21, 2003).

3.3.3 Water Supply

Irrigation

The major water agencies within the Study Area are A&B and MID. Both irrigation districts supply irrigation water to the majority of farms located within district boundaries. Their resources and coverage are described in Section 3.1, Land Use.

Water Rights

In the state of Idaho, water rights within the borders of A&B and MID are delivered to individual farm units. In most cases, the farm unit is irrigated with water obtained from the irrigation district through exercise of the water right obtained under a repayment contract with Reclamation. Reclamation holds title to these water rights for the beneficial use of the water users who entered into repayment contracts. In contrast to private lands within the irrigation district boundaries, most Reclamation parcels do not hold water rights. As a result, these parcels cannot legally be irrigated with project water unless a water right (and associated construction, operation, and maintenance costs) can be transferred from another parcel, which is a legally and administratively cumbersome process, and therefore highly unusual. Urban parcels within the irrigation district that are no longer farmed provide a possible source for additional water rights.

Domestic Water

Domestic water used by residents of rural parts of the Study Area, including inhabitants of Reclamation parcels, depend on well water drawn from the Snake River Plain Aquifer, the sole-source aquifer for the region.

3.3.4 Wastewater Treatment and Irrigation Nutrient Management

Irrigation Return Flow

Irrigation return flow is drained from farm land through a series of drains. Historically, most of the return flow from MID returned to the Snake River while most A&B return flow was discharged back into the aquifer using injection wells. Reclamation has strongly supported discontinuing this practice to protect water quality. Irrigation return flow is described in Section 2.6, Water Quality and Contaminants.

Domestic Sewage

Wastewater is collected by municipal sewage collection and treatment systems operated by all the jurisdictions in the Study Area. These serve both residential and industrial waste water generators. Outside of local city limits, residents rely on septic systems for wastewater treatment, including homes on Reclamation lands occupied by A&B employees (Personal Communication, Dan Temple, June 6, 2002). The City of Rupert relies on land leased from Reclamation for disposal of wastewater. Rupert uses an irrigation pivot to spray wastewater on private farm fields and one 160-acre farm located on Reclamation parcel 824-11-W to dispose of municipal and industrial wastewater. As this facility nears its 3.5 million gallon per day capacity, Rupert will need to expand its facilities to another site. The new facilities may recycle the wastewater for municipal irrigation, reducing the need for irrigation water and land for storage lagoons during the summer (Personal Communication, Richard Castro, August 14, 2002). Rupert's current plans include doubling its existing two irrigation pivots to four within the next 4 years, depending on population growth (Personal Communication, David Joyce, June 22, 2003).

